

## **REPORT TO EXECUTIVE**

Date of Meeting: 23 September 2025

## **REPORT TO COUNCIL**

Date of Meeting: 14 October 2025

Report of: Strategic Director for People and Communities

Title: Housing Complaints Policy 2025-2030

### **Is this a Key Decision?**

No

### **Is this an Executive or Council Function?**

Council

#### **1. What is the report about?**

1.1 The report summarises the new Housing Complaints Policy 2025-2030. It is proposed that the revised Policy be adopted and implemented. A copy of the Policy document is appended.

#### **2. Recommendations:**

2.1 That Executive recommends that Council approve the adoption of the new Housing Complaints Policy for the period.

#### **3. Reasons for the recommendation:**

3.1 Following the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 the Housing Ombudsman issued a Complaint Handling Code became statutory from 1st April 2024. This code was introduced to enable 'a positive complaints culture across the social housing sector'.

3.2 A Housing Complaints Policy for Exeter City Council was introduced from April 2024.

3.3 The Housing Ombudsman has a statutory duty to monitor compliance with the Code, as part of this, landlords are expected to have a Housing Complaints Policy and complete a Self-Assessment against the requirements of the code.

3.4 In May 2025, the Housing Ombudsman asked to see a copy of our Housing Complaints Policy and the Self-Assessment document in order to undertake a review, they also reviewed information about complaints on the Council's website.

#### **4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources**

4.1 The dedicated complaints handling team which is already in place will fully comply with the recommendations and revised policy requirements to ensure that we provide a compliant and excellent service, at this time no additional staffing or other resources are required.

## **5. Section 151 Officer comments:**

5.1 There are no financial implications contained in this report.

## **6. What are the legal aspects?**

6.1 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 requires all social landlords, including local authorities, to have a clear and accessible complaints policy. The Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator of Social Housing both set expectations for how complaints should be handled. For example, the Housing Ombudsman requires local authorities that are registered providers of social housing to comply with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. The Regulator of Social Housing sets expectations in the form of consumer standards requiring landlords to, inter alia, provide accessible, clear, and responsive complaints procedures. The Regulator also has the power to carry out regular inspections and assess whether providers are meeting new Consumer Standards, including those on complaints handling in accordance with the provisions of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

## **7. Monitoring Officer's comments:**

7.1 Members will note the legal aspects above. The Monitoring Officer has no additional comments.

## **8. Report details:**

8.1 The Housing Ombudsman wrote to our Chief Executive on 1st August saying '*Our review is focussed on ensuring landlords have met the requirements of the Code based on what residents can reasonably expect to be included in a policy document.*'

8.2 The Housing Ombudsman attached a list of 16 recommendations where it found that some elements of the existing policy and information on our website needed to reflect the most up to date guidance.

8.3 The letter went on to say '*We encourage all landlords to carefully consider any recommended changes to policy and to take time to ensure that any changes are embedded across the organisation.*'

8.4 Having studied their recommendations in detail it was decided to act upon these without delay and a thorough review of the policy was undertaken. The letter provides a deadline for updating the policy:

8.5 '*In the case of Exeter City Council, we would expect the submission to be provided within 6 months of the financial year-end, and no later than 30 September 2025.*'

8.6 The 'submission' they refer to is our up-to-date Self-Assessment document which references the new policy and revised website information.

8.7 The Housing Complaints Policy has therefore been updated to ensure compliance with the Complaint Handling Code and is appended to this report.

8.8 As the content of the policy is prescribed by the Housing Ombudsman it is not proposed to publish the policy for public consultation.

## **9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**

9.1 The delivery of the objectives within this policy accord with the intended outcomes as set out in the new Corporate Plan including:

*'focusing on priorities, efficient delivery of services' and*

*'delivery of cost effective and accessible customer focused services'*

## **10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**

10.1 The Regulator of Social Housing will examine all our policies as part of their inspection regime, not having one in place could cause the service to be awarded a lower grade.

## **11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)**

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 In recommending this proposal potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act and an Equalities Impact Assessment has been included in the background papers for Member's attention.

## **12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:**

12.1 There are no direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

## **13. Are there any other options?**

13.1 There are no other options as the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code is statutory and as responsible social landlords we are required to adhere to it.

## **Strategic Director People and Communities Jo Yelland**

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### **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

[Compensation policy | Housing Ombudsman](#)

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